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ABSTRACT

The integrated information system being used by the Southfield, Michigan, school district to enroll and assess new transfer students makes use of the data processing services of the Oakland Intermediate School District. High school administrative and counseling offices have access to a student database on the district's mainframe computer via online workstations consisting of IBM 3278 terminals and IBM personal computers using terminal emulation capabilities. Registration data for new transfer students is recorded first, and then student assessment data are entered and used to place students in the appropriate instructional environment. In the case of high school students, information is sent to the high school counseling office through the information network, and the students' scheduling information is also entered in the system. Teachers are informed of new enrollees, and information about new students is also sent to the district's transportation office to arrange for bus assignments. A pilot program is also being planned to include private school children in the system so that their transportation needs can be handled electronically as well. (EW)

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INTEGRATED INFORMATION SYSTEM APPROACH TO NEW ENROLLEES

INTRODUCTION

The Southfield Public Schools is a suburban K-12 school district of approximately 8500 students adjacent to the city of Detroit, Michigan. It is respected as a high achieving school district offering an exceptionally broad array of instructional and support services to its students.

In recent years, the district has been experiencing continuous and increasing student turnover, as new families arrive while others move into other parts of the metropolitan area or country. This demographic change has necessitated a response by the district to ascertain correctly the prior achievement levels of new students, and the corresponding appropriate grades or courses to meet their previous learnings and skills. To accomplish this, the district has instituted a central evaluation process, operated through the district's Office of Central Registry. This office determines the eligibility of new families, and implements assessment of the current achievement levels of all students entering grades 6-12 (all elementary students are assessed at their local elementary school).

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Technology has permitted the Southfield Public Schools to carry out its enrollment and placement policy in a very effective manner. Like many of its neighboring districts in Oakland County, Southfield uses the data processing services of the Oakland Intermediate School District. These include a mainframe system with a staff of programming and systems personnel, as well as technically competent consultants in each of the discipline areas.

A part of the mainframe system includes a student data base software package called RAMS. RAMS is a remotely accessible management system. Most of the 28 school districts in Oakland County use this database system, as does Southfield. Every student in the Southfield Public Schools has records in this IBM IMS data base. These records include demographic, testing, scheduling, grade reporting, scholastic transcript, attendance, vocational education, special education, and transportation data on each student.

District Central Administration as well as high school administrative and counseling offices have access to this student data base through on-line work stations. Work stations consist of IBM 3278 terminals and IBM Personal Computers using terminal emulation capabilities. These stations are connected through IBM 3274 Cluster controllers and IBM 3708 network conversion units and across leased telephone lines to the mainframe. Middle schools are connected via dial-up modems to an IBM 3708 in the district. Elementary Schools will also be connected through this system by the end of this school year.

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Security is maintained through a centrally controlled access system and an elaborate password procedure. Certain terminals can only view information while others have update capability. For example, within a high school building, only the attendance office may update a student's attendance record, while the counseling office and other administrative offices have viewing capability.

NEW STUDENT DISTRICT INTAKE PROCEDURES

A new student's experience at the Central Registry begins with a clerk who accesses the student data base to assure that the address of the new enrollee is in fact not that of an existing student. Once this as well as other enrollment criteria have been met, the clerk enters the student's demographic data directly into a terminal and into the master data base. Such information includes emergency health information such as immunization data and allergies.

Upon completion of this Registration process, the student then participates in an assessment procedure to determine reading and math achievement levels. The student's responses to the standardized test are scanned, and the raw scores are then entered into the mainframe system through another terminal. Programs within the mainframe score the test and create profiles and other necessary statistics. Test results and profiles printed at the Central Registry enable skilled district staff to place the student into the appropriate instructional environment. The parents and student are sent to the assigned school of attendance to complete the enrollment process.

NEW STUDENT SCHOOL PROCEDURES

In the case of the high school new enrollee, by the time s/he arrives at the school, work on the processing of that student has already begun. Electronically, the counseling office has become aware of the impending arrival of the new student. The same entrance testing data that were available at the Central Registry are also available to the counselor at the high school through that counselor's PC terminal. The counselor uses that information along with whatever scholastic records are available from the student's former school to place the student into the appropriate high school courses and sections. This scheduling information is simply added to the already existing demographic, emergency, and testing data already stored in the system.

Through the PC terminal on each counselor's desk, the student's course requests are entered, and a proposed schedule is automatically created by the mainframe computer. This proposed schedule takes into account any section and teacher preferences entered by the counselor. Upon review of the schedule by the counselor, the enrollee and the parents, the counselor can then adjust and lock the schedule into place.

At the end of each day's activities, another program is executed in the mainframe which creates a report for each classroom teacher showing the new enrollee's from that day's activities. That report is in the teacher's mail box the next morning.

TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

Meanwhile, another very important activity is going on at another district office. At about the same time the school learns of the new enrollee, so does the transportation office. Electronically, through the mainframe system, the transportation office is informed of the new student. Through a terminal also tied into the intermediate district's mainframe, personnel in the transportation office determine the student's transportation eligibility status, stop assignment, route assignment, and pick-up time. This information is stored in the electronic file in a special transportation segment.

This information then becomes available back at the local school through the counselor's terminal, and the parent and student are immediately informed of the student's transportation status. Another report is generated for the driver who becomes aware of the student's eligibility for the following day.

Because the Southfield Public Schools is also obligated to transport resident non-public school students to private schools within the district boundaries, a pilot will begin this spring to emulate the registration system at the private school site. Through dial-up modems and a PC located at the private school, new students there will be enrolled into the same master data base by personnel at the private school. The transportation department will again become aware of these students through electronic notification. As with a public school student, the transportation department schedules the non-public student, with the scheduling information becoming available back at the private school terminal.

SUMMARY

In operation for less than a year, the registration system described above has significantly reduced the time between registration and the student's arrival at the assigned classes. Further, it has improved the placement process by providing a greater amount of information in a more timely manner. And finally, it has contributed to the district's improved response to the transportation needs of students.

Thus, the integration of technological resources and services available at both the local and intermediate district levels has facilitated a rapid, effective and efficient system of comprehensive student intake. All members of the Southfield community - parents, students, teachers, administrators, local and central office personnel regard the technological innovations as an indispensable new working tool and a highly valued new resource.